

REMARKS

Applicants thank Examiner Cozart for conducting the kind and courteous discussion with Applicants' representative, Daniel R. Evans, on February 14, 2006. The content of the discussion is reflected in the amendments to the Claims and the following remarks.

The rejections of any one of Claims 10, 13, 17, 20, 24, 27, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over US 6,155,302 (US '302) and under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over US 6,596,122 (US '122) are respectfully traversed.

The Office has taken the position that the product-by-process limitations do not distinguish over the references of record because "the prior art discloses a product which reasonably appears to be either identical with or only slightly different than a product claimed in a product-by-process claim" (see November 8, 2005 Office Action, page 4, lines 11-13).

Applicants direct the Examiner's attention to the disclosure of US '122 disclosing the differences between laser-welded products, which reads as follows (see US '122 at col. 2, lines 3-9):

Laser welding has additional problems. Bond strengths can be disappointing. Vaporization and flashing (ignition) of substrate can occur when gaps occur between the interface of the two materials. Laser welding also tends to create surface pits and craters. Although lasers have been on the market for a considerable time, their cost is still relatively high.

Applicants note that US '122 discloses that laser welded parts are undesirable. Applicants also note that US '122 welds parts together by way of an infrared source (see US '122: Figs. 1-4 and 10 and col. 6, lines 35-36 and line 60).

Clearly, the amended claims are readily distinguishable over that which is disclosed by US '122 by way of a product-by-process limitation.

It is respectfully requested that the Examiner acknowledge the same and withdraw the rejection over US '122.

US '302 does not disclose or suggest a laser-welded part. Rather, US '302 discloses a fastening device "that has a so-called Christmas-tree profile on its outer circumference" (see US '302 at col. 2, lines 13-14 and Figs. 1 and 3).

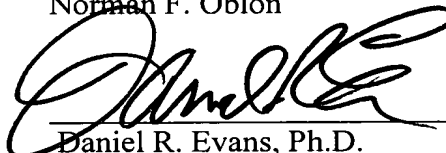
Applicants note that the amended claims are readily distinguishable over that which is disclosed by US '302 by way of a product-by-process limitation when viewed in light of the disclosure of US '122.

It is respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

In view of the amendments to the claims and the remarks contained herewith, it is believed that the present application is now in a condition for allowance. Should the Examiner deem that a personal or telephonic interview would be helpful in advancing this application toward allowance, he is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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